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ABSTRACT

A study examined the perceptions and practices of 160 work program coordinators in Georgia (44% of the sample) regarding the teaching of work ethics. A literature review had shown that a consistent view of potential employers was that graduates of vocational education programs should be well grounded in the concept of work ethics. The main purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which the concept of the work ethic was being taught by the coordinators. The questionnaire that was developed used items concerning moral development theory, moral education, and enabling work ethics. Findings indicated that, although work program coordinators believed they were prepared to teach work ethics and believed that work ethics could be taught in school, the teaching of work ethics in their classrooms was informal or unintentional. Discussion of workplace problems was by far the most often used activity to teach work ethics. While the coordinators indicated that they promoted behaviors which they believed teachers should promote and in which students should engage, they did not believe their students learned these behaviors very well. These findings implied that work program coordinators should be given extensive inservice training in the teaching of enabling work ethics and a curriculum should be developed to enable work program coordinators to teach an enabling work ethic in a developmental and intentional way. (Appendixes include 32 references and 5 data tables.) (YLB)

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THE TEACHING OF WORK ETHICS: CURRENT PRACTICES OF WORK PROGRAM COORDINATORS IN GEORGIA

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THE TEACHING OF WORK ETHICS: CURRENT PRACTICES OF WORK PROGRAM COORDINATORS IN GEORGIA

Abstract

A consistent view of potential employers is that graduates of vocational education programs should be well grounded in the concept of work ethics. This study examined the perceptions and practices of work program coordinators in Georgia regarding the teaching of work ethics. The main purpose was to determine the extent to which the concept of the work ethic was being taught by the coordinators. A random sample of 170 was drawn from the population of 452 work program coordinators. The findings of the study indicate that while work program coordinators believe they are prepared to teach work ethics, and believe that work ethics can be taught in school, the teaching of work ethics in their classrooms is informal or unintentional.

Introduction and Theoretical Base

Because of a perceived lack of productivity in the United States in the past decade, individual employers and the United States Government have questioned the health of America's work ethic. Gordon Swanson, (1989) indicated that American manufacturers "suffered seventy times as many assembly-like defects and made seventeen times as many service calls in the first year of service as the manufacturers in Japan" .

Articles such as "What Happened to the Work Ethic" (Maccoby & Terzi, 1981), "Teach Kids How to Work, American Schools Urged" (Dart, 1992), and "New Work Ethic Is Frightening" (Sheehy, 1990) have permeated the literature for the past decade. A report by the US. Department of Labor (1991) said that "more than half of our young people leave school without knowledge or foundation to find and hold a good job." This same report went on to say that employers would like to take for

granted that new employees will come to the workplace with responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity/honesty, but they cannot.

Employers and society have been calling for workers with a more positive work ethic, while educators have been developing educational strategies for the teaching of employability skills, job retention skills, and work values. Workshops (Kadamus & Dagget, 1986), evaluations (Chandler, 1989), and curriculum (Marr & Roessler, 1986; Miller & Coady, 1984) have all been devised to enable teachers to better train vocational education students in an enabling work ethic. Buck & Barrick, (1987), stated that "teaching employability skills may be the key to ending placement worries for students, teachers, and employers."

The term work ethic as used in this research refers to "the beliefs, values, and principles that guide the way individuals interpret and act upon their rights and responsibilities within the work context at any given time" (Miller & Coady, 1984, p. 5). This definition in part derives its traditional applications from the philosophy of Max Weber. Weber believed that capitalism was the social counterpart of Calvinist theology and thus the presence of monetary gain by means of "diligence, thrift, sobriety and prudence" (Tawney, 1958, p. 3) was an ally to religious theory. It is from Weber's philosophy that the term Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) is derived, and it is this philosophy which, to some extent, underlines work ethics today and has certainly, in the past, been the foundation for the work ethic philosophy in the United States.

An enabling work ethic, as defined by Miller and Coady (1984), is an "integrated and interactive system of attitudes, values, and beliefs that empower an individual to adapt to and initiate change in order to sustain long-term harmony with his or her work environment" (p. 6). Miller and Coady suggest that persons who attain an enabling work ethic move through stages of development much like persons move through the stages of moral development suggested by Kohlberg, Piaget and others.

Moral development theory is the foundation for moral education theory. One aspect of a moral education is the teaching of the work ethic. The moral development stages described by Piaget and Kohlberg and the feminine perspective given to those stages by Gilligan and Chodorow must be a part of any moral education curriculum if educators are to be pedagogically effective in the teaching of the work ethic (Kohlberg, Selman& Lickona; Gilligan, 1982). Educators can not teach work ethics effectively if they do not understand the developmental stages within which their students function (Kohlberg, Selman, & Lickona, 1972).

Moral education, which has been a controversial issue since the early years of education (Amundson, 1991; Giroux, 1991; Noddings, 1991; Purpel & Ryan, 1976), endeavors to move students from one stage of development to the next higher stage of development. This development can be accomplished by a teacher/facilitator who has knowledge of moral development theory and has established a safe and non threatening classroom environment (Hersh & Paolitto, 1979; Kohlberg, Selman, & Lickona, 1972).

Kohlberg's research which complimented and expanded that of Piaget suggested that there are six stages of moral development: (1) the punishment and obedience orientation, (2) the instrumental relativism orientation, (3) the interpersonal concord of "Good boy, Nice girl" orientation, (4) the law and order orientation, (5) the social-contract legalistic orientation, and (6) the universal ethical principle orientation . Kohlberg also organized these six stages into three levels of development. Stages 1 and 2 occur in what he calls the Pre-Conventional Level, Stages 3 and 4 occur at the Conventional level, and Stages 5 and 6 occur at the Post-Conventional, Autonomous or Principled Level (Kohlberg, 1971). Gilligan (1982) and others (Chodorow, 1974; Lever, 1976), however, point out that there are some definite differences in the manner in which males and females process moral dilemmas. These differences are not better or worse; they are just different.

Work program coordinators who seek to teach an enabling work ethic must utilize the same teaching methods as moral educators. In fact, they must become moral educators to a large extent. They must teach work ethics overtly through sound pedagogical techniques (Berryman, 1991; Hersh & Paolitto, 1979; Kohlberg, Selman, and Lickona, 1972; Miller & Coady, 1984). More importantly, perhaps, the coordinators must teach through the "hidden curriculum"--the work ethics modeled by the coordinator, and the classroom environment established by the coordinator (Miller and Coady, 1984; Purpel, 1991; Sichel, 1991).

There has been a great deal of research in the methodology of teaching ethical behavior (Hersh & Paolitto, 1979). Research has shown that the teaching methods which instructors utilize when they present material will have a direct impact on the moral development of students (Beach, 1991; Giroux, 1991; Noddings, 1991; Sichel, 1991).

An outgrowth of contemporary learning theory is the concept of cognitive apprenticeships. This basis for this concept is the apprenticeships of old in which students learned from a master as the students practiced the trade of the master. Cognitive apprenticeship as defined by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) is an approach to learning which embedds learning in activity and makes deliberate use of the social and physical context of learning. Learning activities in a cognitive apprenticeship should allow the student a chance to observe, engage in, invent or discover expert strategies in context (Berryman, 1991). Teachers who engage students in a cognitive apprenticeship use a variety of teaching strategies: modeling, coaching, scaffolding, fading, articulation, reflection, and exploration.

It is possible that these teaching methods can successfully be employed in the teaching of an enabling work ethic. One of the basic premises of cognitive apprenticeship is that learning should take place <u>in situ.</u> This is easily met in the cooperative education program. Students are engaged in activities in the work place

and consistently encounter ethical dilemmas as they perform their assigned tasks at their work stations. In this context a coordinator may use the strategies of modeling, coaching, scaffolding, fading, articulation, reflection, and/or exploration to assist students in developing an enabling work ethic.

Purpose of the Study

Because employers and society in general are consistently telling educators that students are leaving school without enabling work ethics, a study is needed to examine the teaching of enabling work ethics in vocational education. The main objective of this study was to determine the extent to which the concept of an enabling work ethic is being taught in secondary work programs. Coordinators' methods of teaching enabling work ethics are a major concern of this study because if instructors are using an ineffective means of teaching moral development, i.e. the development of an enabling work ethic, they may not be teaching students as efficiently as they can.

Coordinators' philosophies concerning the teaching of enabling work ethics are a second area of inquiry in this study. Logic dictates that if coordinators believe that an enabling work ethic cannot be taught, they will not make an attempt to guide students in the development of ethical work behavior.

Instructors' understanding and awareness of moral development theory was also a thrust of the research. In the teaching of an enabling work ethic (which is a moral development), instructors must be aware of students' stages of development if they are to assist students in moving to higher stages of development (Kholberg, et.al., 1972). Without a knowledge of moral development theory and an understanding of the stages of moral development, instructors may be ineffective in teaching students the kind of enabling work ethic which will empower them to become an asset to the work force of the future (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975; Noddings, 1991).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to determine:

1. the extent to which secondary work program coordinators believe that enabling work ethics should be taught in schools;
2. the extent to which secondary work program coordinators are currently teaching enabling work ethics.
3. the teaching methods which secondary work program coordinators employ in teaching enabling work ethics to their students;
4. the extent to which secondary work program coordinators are aware of moral development theory as it applies to the teaching of an enabling work ethic;

Methodology Of The Study

This study involved survey research. Historically, surveys have been used to acquire data about teachers, supervisors, and administrators. Van Dalen and Meyer (1962) stated that "numerous surveys study the behavior of instructional personnel in the classroom, the department, and the community with the objective of assessing or improving teaching effectiveness"(p. 209).

A questionnaire was developed and used in surveying a random sample of the work program coordinators in Georgia. Items used on the questionnaire were developed by the researchers from the literature concerning moral development theory, moral education, and enabling work ethics. The validity of the survey instrument was tested by distributing the objectives of the study and the survey instrument to a panel of experts. The instrument was revised in accord with the suggestions of the panel. The instrument was then field tested using non participants in the study. A reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability to determine

whether the questions posed on the survey had an acceptable level of reliability. The alpha was determined to be .905.

Population

The population utilized for this study consisted of all of the secondary work program coordinators in Georgia. Secondary work program coordinators were utilized for this study because their students attend school and are employed in the work place. These students have an immediate need for an enabling work ethic since they are employed by the business community. It is these training station supervisors who consistently request that the students who are sent to them by the work program coordinator have an enabling work ethic. No other programs in secondary schools work in partnership with the business community in the same way that work programs work with the business community.

There were 452 secondary work programs in the state of Georgia. Using Nunnery and Kimbrough's formula (1971), the researchers determined that the correct sample size was 170. Potential respondents were identified using random sampling procedures. An initial mailing and two follow-ups resulted in the return of 160 questionnaires (94%). Of the respondents 58 were male and 102 were female.

Findings of the Study

Objective 1 of this study was to determine whether secondary work program coordinators believe that work ethics should be taught in high school. Using a five point likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, don't know, agree, or strongly agree, coordinators were asked to respond to the statement "Work ethics should be taught to students in school." The mean score response for this statement was 4.66 which indicated that respondents agree that work ethics should be taught in school.

Coordinators were asked to respond to statements concerning the teaching of work ethics. They were asked to respond to a five point Likert scale. Each of these responses were numerically coded with strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, 3 = don't know, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree . The statement, "The only place that work ethics can be learned is on the job." received a mean response of 1.77 which indicated that respondents believed that work ethics can be taught in places other than on the job. The statement, "I believe that vocational ethics should be a specific course of instruction in our school." received a mean score of 3.22, with a standard deviation of 1.11, which indicated that most coordinators were not sure or were in disagreement whether work ethics should be a specific course in school.

Objective 2 was to determine the extent to which coordinators are currently teaching work ethics. The data in Table 1 indicate that the majority (66.87%) devote from 0 to 25% of their curriculum to the teaching of work ethics.

Insert Table 1 here

Coordinators were asked to indicate whether they teach work ethics daily, weekly, monthly, at no regular interval, or never. The data in Table 2 indicate that about half of the coordinators teach work ethics at no regular interval. Most of the others teach it on a weekly or monthly basis.

Insert Table 2 here

Objective 3 was to determine the teaching methods which coordinators use in their classrooms. Respondents were asked "What teaching methods are most often employed by coordinators in the teaching of work ethics?". They were given 8 choices to which to respond: role playing, discussion of work related problems, lecture, textbook, discussion of moral dilemmas, modeling, films, and other. Table 3 shows that a wide variety of methods was used with discussion of work related problems being the activity employed most often in the teaching of work ethics (91.25%) for all

those who responded to the questionnaire. The method employed least often was the use of films (33.13%).

Insert Table 3 here

When comparisons of methodology were made using gender as a means of comparison, results showed that there were three areas in which males and females differed: males used a text book in teaching work ethics more often than females (males 70.69% and females 49.02%), females used modeling of desired behaviors more often than did males (males 39.66% and females 67.65%), and females used films almost 5 times as often as did males (males 6.9% and females 29.41%).

Coordinators were also asked "Which of the following strategies do you employ in the teaching of work ethics? (Circle as many as apply)." Choices were scaffolding, fading, articulation, and reflection. Responses to this item are presented on Table 4. The coordinators used a variety of strategies with scaffolding (88.75%) and articulation (86.88%) being the two most popular strategies. Reflection appeared to be the least popular.

Insert Table 4 here

When the teaching methods listed above were compared by gender, there were two differences found: females used fading more than males (females = 64.71% and males 48.28%), and more males used reflection than did females (males = 62.07% and females = 42.16%).

Respondents were asked to respond to a group of statements concerning how they perceive work ethics is taught. Responses were ranked on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The mean response to the statement, "Students learn work ethics by watching others work." was 3.74; male coordinators' mean response was 3.77 while the mean response for female coordinators' was 3.72. A t-test showed no significant difference in the responses of males and those of females.

Coordinators were asked to respond to the statement, "How instructors behave in the classroom teaches students work ethics." The mean value for this item was 4.24. The mean value for male respondents was 4.16 and for female respondents was 4.29. A t-test revealed no significant difference between the responses of males and females.

Coordinators were asked to respond to the statement, "Teachers who model good work ethics are more likely to teach good work ethics." The mean response to this statement was 4.48 which indicates that the respondents agreed with the statement. A comparison of male responses and female responses using a t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the mean of 4.52 for male respondents and 4.45 for female respondents.

Coordinators were asked to respond to the statement, "I believe that my college work prepared me to teach work ethics in my classroom." The mean response to this item was 2.87 which indicated that most respondents disagree with the statement. Male respondents had a mean response of 2.68 while female respondents had a mean response of 2.97. A t-test indicated no significant difference in responses of male and female respondents.

Coordinators were asked to respond to the statement "I believe that I am confident to teach work ethics in my classroom" . The mean response was 4.33 which indicated that most of the respondents agreed with the statement. When a mean response score of 4.25 for males and a 4.38 for females was tested for significant differences with a t-test, no difference was found.

A list of behaviors was presented in the survey: (1) be on time, (2) turn in work on time, (3) turn in work that is neat and well done, (4) come to school and work regularly, (5) be prepared for class (bring books, pencil, pen and do homework), (6) show respect for teacher/those in authority, (7) show respect for peers, (8) have initiative, and (9) be honest. Coordinators were asked to indicate how often they promote these behaviors: never, seldom, some of the time, most of the time, and all of

the time. Each of the responses were given a numerical code from 1 to 5 with 5 representing all of the time and 1 representing never.

The mean responses to these items indicated that coordinators promoted the behaviors most of the time (Table 5). There were no behaviors which were promoted more often than others when simple totals were compared. There were, however, two significant differences between the responses of males and females. Females promoted the behavior "turn in work that is neat and well done" (4.77) more strongly than did their male counterparts (4.41). Females also promoted the behavior "show respect for peers" more strongly than did males (4.63).

Coordinators were asked to rate how well they believed that their current students had learned the nine behaviors These responses were ranked from 5 (very well) to 1 (not at all). Teacher responses to these items indicated that the student behaviors which respondents believed that their students had learned most well were "to be punctual" (4.05) and "to have respect for teachers and those in authority" (4.01). The behaviors which coordinators believed that their students had learned least well were "to be prepared for class" (3.66) and "to have initiative" (3.39) (Table 5).

Insert Table 5 here

Calculations were done to determine if there were correlations between the behaviors coordinators promote in their classroom and the behaviors students are most successful in learning. Table 5 presents the results of these correlations which indicates that there were correlations between teaching and learning of the student behaviors (1) "turn in neat work." (2) "have respect for peers," (3) "have initiative," and (4) "be honest." The remaining behaviors showed no correlations.

Objective 4 was to determine the extent to which secondary work program coordinators were aware of moral development theory as it applies to the teaching of an enabling work ethic. Coordinators were asked to respond to statements concerning

moral development theory and the teaching of work ethics. Responses were numerically coded from 1 to 5; 1 indicated strongly disagreed while 5 indicated strongly agree. The statement: "Students go through stages in the development of work ethics." received a mean response of 4.14 which indicated that the coordinators surveyed believed that students do go through stages in the development of work ethics.

Coordinators were asked to respond to the statement, "The development of work ethics is a part of moral development." The mean response to this item was 4.35 indicating that most coordinators agreed with the statement; however the standard deviation was .85 and the range of scores was from 1 to 5 which indicates a wide variety of responses to the statement.

Respondents were asked to answer the question, "Have you had a course which included moral development theory?" Respondents were asked to respond either "yes" or "no."

Twelve point five percent of the respondents replied that they had a course which included moral development theory while 87.5% responded that they had had no course work.

Implications

The findings of this study seem to indicate that while work program coordinators believe that they are prepared to teach work ethics and believe, for the most part, that an enabling work ethic can be taught in school, the teaching of work ethics in their classrooms is unintentional. There does not seem to be a specific area of the curriculum devoted to the teaching of work ethics, and the coordinators in this study indicated that they teach work ethics only when a situation arises that calls for such teaching.

Discussion of work place problems was by far the most often utilized activity employed to teach work ethics. The remainder of the strategies listed were employed unevenly among all groups surveyed. About half of the coordinators who responded to the survey, employed lecture as a means of teaching an enabling work ethic. The style of the lecture (didactic or Socratic) would determine whether this method was helpful in enabling students to move to a more sophisticated problem solving style. It is interesting to note that women employed modeling as a teaching strategy almost twice as often as men.

The use of cognitive apprenticeship strategies in teaching an enabling work ethic also showed no consistent trends. The only strategy which seemed to be utilized with any consistency was scaffolding. All coordinators regardless of gender, program, degree, or years of experience consistently employed this strategy more than half of the time; even employed the strategy more than 75% of the time.

Women seemed to to allow students to work on their own more than men as 64% of the women employed fading while only 48% of the men employed the same strategy. On the other hand, men employed reflection (allowing students to compare their own thinking with a more mature problem solver) more than women.

While the coordinators in this survey indicated that they promoted behaviors which they believed teachers should promote and in which students should engage, they did not believe that their students learned these behaviors very well. This inability of students to learn the desired behaviors may be a result of an erratic teaching of work ethics or a curriculum which does not intentionally teach an enabling work ethic. It may also indicate that while coordinators believe they are promoting the behaviors indicated on the survey form, they may, in fact, not be promoting them at all or may not be promoting them to the extent to which they believe they are.

While the coordinators believed that they were promoting behaviors which they would like for their students to emulate, they were unsure whether students learned

work ethics from watching others perform their work. On the other hand, coordinators believed that teachers with good work ethics are more successful in teaching work ethics and that how an instructor's classroom behavior teaches good work ethics. These inconsistent responses on the part of the coordinators may be a partial reason that students, according to the coordinators surveyed, do not learn the majority of the positive behaviors indicated on the survey.

This erratic teaching of work ethics may also be a result of lack of expertise on the part of the coordinators. Since only about 12% of the teachers in this study had a course in moral development this might indicate that while teachers believed that the teaching of work ethics is important, they may not have the the educational expertise with which to teach work ethics. However, the coordinators in this study believed that they are prepared to teach work ethics.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study the following recommendations are made:

1. Work program coordinators should be given extensive in-service training in the teaching of enabling work ethics.
2. Additional study should be done to determine whether the conscious teaching of work ethics in the classroom improves students' development of an enabling work ethic.
3. A curriculum should be developed to enable work program coordinators to teach an enabling work ethic in a developmental and intentional way.
4. Further study should be done to determine whether students display enabling work ethics on the job more often than in the classroom.
5. Additional study should be done to the impact of work ethics displayed in the work place on students in work programs.

6. Additional study should be done to determine the impact of the work ethics of coworkers on the work program student.

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Table 1

Per Cent of Curriculum Devoted to the Teaching of Work Ethics

		0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Gender					
	Male	76.86	5.1	8.6	10.34
	Female	63.73	14.70	4.9	16.66.
Total		68.12	11.25	6.25	14.37

Table 2

Amount of Time Spent Teaching Work Ethics

		Daily	Weekly	Monthly	No Regular Interval	Never	Total Time
Gender							
	Male	24.14	00.00	29.31	46.55	00.00	100
	Female	30.39	1.96	19.61	48.04	00.00	100
Total		28.13	1.25	23.13	47.50	00.00	100

Note. Values represent per cent of the individual groups.

Table 3

Teaching Strategies Employed to Teach Work Ethics

	Role Playing	Work Problem Discussion	Lecture	Text	Moral Dilemma Discussion	Modeling	Film
Male	48.28	91.38	58.62	70.69	62.07	39.66	6.90
Female	51.96	91.18	63.73	49.02	64.71	67.65	29.41
Total	50.63	91.25	68.13	52.50	66.88	65.13	33.13

Note. The values represent per cent of those in individual groups.

Table 4

Teaching Strategies Employed in the Teaching of Work Ethics

Demographics		Scaffolding	Fading	Articulation	Reflection
Gender					
	Male	87.93	48.28	82.76	62.07
	Female	89.22	64.71	89.22	42.16
Total		88.75	58.75	82.22	49.38

Note. Values represent per cent of the individual groups.

Table 5

Correlations Between Students Behaviors Promoted in the Classroom and Student Behaviors Learned

Behaviors	Promoted Mean	SD	Learned Mean	SD	Pearson Corr. Coefficient	p
Punctual	4.86	.39	4.05	.71	-0.198	0.8041
Turn in work on time	4.77	.42	3.85	.79	0.090	0.2585
Turn in neat work	4.64	.53	3.59	.95	0.263	0.0009*
Have good attendance	4.87	.34	3.83	.91	0.150	0.0603
Be prepared for class	4.79	.45	3.66	.92	0.135	0.0895
Show respect for authority	4.89	.33	4.01	.85	0.140	0.0783
Show respect for peers	4.75	.49	3.77	.90	0.028	0.0003*
Have initiative	4.68	.52	3.39	1.06	0.264	0.0008*
Be honest	4.87	.32	3.81	.93	0.288	0.0002*

*$p<.05$